

Wrestling Perspective

• Analysis And Commentary From Two Guys Who Love Professional Wrestling •

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The NWA - Don't Just Try To Get By

If WrestleWar '90 is any indication of what to expect from the NWA over the next few months, the NWA and its fans are in trouble.

The card was relatively weak with the exceptions of a fantastic Midnight Express vs. Rock and Roll Express match and a great main event marred by a Dusty Rhodes finish. Up until its final moments, the main event had all the ingredients of a classic match. The initial Luger explosion, Flair's comeback, Sting's ringside appearance, Luger's subsequent dominance and the work by both men made this one of the most intense matches ever.

Rather than make it a classic, the NWA chose to replay Starrcade '85 and have the Anderson's ruin the main event while endangering the promotion's top babyface. Fans pay for conclusive finishes on Pay-Per-Views, or at least satisfying ones. The only person satisfied with this finish was a gentleman in Connecticut who had to laugh while shaking his head realizing another year of dominance was secure.

The NWA has fallen on hard times as of late. The recent departures of Steve Williams and The Great Muta, the internal politics, the health problems of Sid Vicious and the injury to Sting's patella tendon leaves the NWA in a great deal of trouble and a less than bright outlook for the immediate future. The ability to turn this negative situation into a positive one will determine if the NWA can be successful over the long haul.

With the singles talent rooster depleted, particularly in the babyface category, it is time to give pushes to young wrestlers and acquire new talent fast. Doug Furnas, Brian Pillman, Tom Zenk (have them drop the US straps to the SST or Midnight Express) and Shane Douglas should all receive major pushes. Cactus Jack's bizarre push should continue and maybe even promoting Lee Scott on a losing streak before hooking him up with a manager, a situation that cries for Paul E. Dangerously. Bring in talent such as Owen Hart, Derrick Dukes, Scotty The Body, Chris Benoit, Ricky Rice, Chris Champion and Brian Lee. These guys are ready, willing and able to join the NWA, and will set the place on fire. There are also seasoned veterans who are capable of succeeding in the NWA such as Ricky Steamboat, Chris Adams, and Tully Blanchard. These men would provide credibility, excellent matches and be teachers to the young lions paying their dues.

The two advantages the NWA has over the WWF are its talent and superior workrate. The acquisition of new talent and maintaining a strong base should be at the top of the NWA's list of priorities. INstead, talent is a priority only if it fits within the budget. The current proposal to drop the Midnight Express and the SSSt shows how unconcerned the NWA is with its image of excellent work. The failure to sign Ricky Steamboat over minimal dollar differences was a clear sign to others about how much good being a team player does for job security. Not coming to terms with Tully Blanchard who, narcotic problems aside, tried to bring WWF wrestlers to the NWA, is a clear signal to any WWF wrestler who may consider defecting or simply joining the NWA when their contracts expire. The dismissal of Paul E. Dangerously and the burial of Eddie Gilbert are beacons to anyone who might consider having creative differences with the organization.

Why be a company man as Steamboat and The Midnight Express have been when your going to have your salary cut. Why have creative differences to better the organization if it is going to result in early retirement or a damaged reputation? Why isn't talent a top priority? Why would anyone want to join an unstable organization?

We're not saying everything is terrible in the NWA. On the contrary, there are a number of good things occurring. The WTBS programs have been phenomenal in ratings and program quality. The Express/Express matches have been a pleasant surprise. The Luger turn was almost done to perfection and the Steiners are so far over their long-term success is guaranteed. There are several positive steps being made. It is imperative, however, that the NWA not follow each step forward with a characteristic step backwards.

The signing of Eddie Gilbert was a positive step, if the intent was to utilize his talents. If the intent was to keep Missy Hyatt and prevent a Gilbert/Dangerously alliance then they are wasting a great mid-level talent and a creative mind. If the NWA was intimidated by a Gilbert/Dangerously alliance, this should clue them in to the fact that they should tap his resources. The turning of Mike Rotunda calls for a renewed push. Here is another worker who has been inexplicably buried as of late which is stupid. Gilbert and Rotunda may not be the most flamboyant wrestlers today but they are two of the best workers in the business. Such talent should not go wasted. To do so is foolhardy.

Now is the time for the NWA to aggressively pursue the future. Luger is over as a face. Make him champion. Make him dominant. Bring in Ricky Steamboat, he wants to work, call him. Contact Bill Watts, and get his input. He has ideas to share. Call Don Owen, and start up a farm system/talent exchange agreement. Both organizations would benefit. Be creative. Be aggressive. Be the best. The minds and talents are there. Just don't try to get by.

Sidelines

Well, we made it to issue #2 thanks to the help of some very generous people. So without further delay or excess prose, let us acknowledge and thank the following people: Dave Meltzer, who provided us with one of the nicest plugs we've ever seen. Steve Beverly, who also provided us with a very nice endorsement that netted us a few subscribers as well. Wade Keller, provided us with a complimentary plug that has helped us reach some wrestling fans out there. Last, but by no stretch of the imagination, least, Brian Tramel of Tape Update fame. Brian provided us with a wonderful plug, an advertisement, suggestions on the first issue and helped us get Issue #1 out to more people than we ever could have on our own. Our sincerest thanks to all of these people who graciously provided us a chance to get started. To them we will always be grateful. Also, we want to thank you, those of you who tried us out for more than one issue and decided to give us another look, those of you who tried us out for more than one issue and anyone who is joining us with Issue #2. As we said last issue, without readers, we may as well write to each other. It is the exchange of ideas that will make this publication work and we are always eagerly awaiting your comments.

Regarding Arsenio Hall, the NWA and Marketing - As most of you are probably aware, a number of conflicting stories arose after we printed that piece. We honestly do not know which story is correct. If one of the two other versions is correct, then we retract the comments entirely. If the story commented on is correct, then we stand by its assertions. Part of the problem in taking a pontifical stance, such as the one taken in that article, is sometimes you find out information after the fact that changes your view entirely. We guess we'll never know and the Hall piece may have just been a writing exercise. Then again, maybe not...

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The Odd Couple to: Wrestling Perspective, PO Box 401 Camillus, NY 13031. All letters sent for publication may be edited and will not be returned. Issue #1 is available for \$1.50

Video Tape Review

By - Paul J. MacArthur

Rock & Roll Music Television - Born To Bleed

The title sounds like a blood bath filled with rock music. In reality it is half an hour of trash heavy metal music videos and clip of matches for no rhyme or reason. Such stars as Randy Savage and Bruiser Brody are profiled in terrible music videos and some clips with Lance Russell doing the announcing chores are also shown, but there is absolutely no rhyme or reason for the clips. There are two clips that are entertaining: one where Bobby Eaton eats dog food, and one where The Fabulous Ones spike piledrive Jim Cornette on concrete. These scenes are wasted as we have no idea why the Fabs jumped Jim or why Bobby is eating Purina. Rhino has a reputation in the record industry for reissuing excellent fifties and sixties recordings (including some classic Ray Charles stuff unavailable for over ten years) and using the original master tapes to meticulously get the best sound possible. I only wish they used the same kind of selectivity when they decided to make a wrestling video. *Not Recommended.*

Rock and Roll Music Television is available from Rhino Video, 1201 Olympic Blvd. Santa Monica, CA 90404. The copy reviewed was purchased at K-Mart for \$9.99.

Short Term Relationship Will Lead To Disaster For The WWF, AJPW And NJPW

By - David Skolnick

On the face of it, the April 13 Tokyo Egg Dome card promises to make history and a great deal of money for all involved. But, a long term agreement between the WWF, All Japan and New Japan is doomed for failure.

Agreements between wrestling promotions can't work for long, especially when you examine the powerful and egotistical leaders of the three companies (Baba may be the exception). Pro Wrestling USA, the 1988 AWA-WCCW-CWA agreement and the NWA-UWF partnership all failed miserably because there are too many egos involved and the promotions are only interested in pushing the top draws from their companies.

The WWF could have been successful working a Japan card alone, since the novelty of an American federation could sell out the Egg Dome. Vince McMahon, however, might not have felt this way and decided to enter into an agreement with New Japan and All Japan, fearing the WWF would fail in Japan in its first attempt.

McMahon probably had this planned for months. Consider that he recently hired Akio Sato, who hardly set the AWA on fire, Baba's long-time booker and the man greatly responsible for the agreement, only weeks prior to the announcement. McMahon probably thinks he needs help in Japan for a while before he strikes out on his own.

Unfortunately for wrestling fans, a McMahon, Baba and Sakaguchi agreement can't live for long, even though it may a temporary necessity with the UWF so far ahead of the competition. New Japan and All Japan, who haven't co-promoted a card in ten years, will soon discover that it may be best to keep their distance especially when McMahon gets that greed bug and forgets about the welfare of other companies.

Although it seems unlikely now, the winner in this unusual situation could be the NWA. Even though it was the NWA's, and more specifically Ric Flair's, actions that led to the April 13 agreement. In Japan, the NWA is the most respected American promotion and once the Japanese fans watch The Ultimate Warrior or Hulk Hogan work a few matches, the NWA will probably become even more popular in Japan. Also, New Japan and All Japan may be willing to work with NWA into the future since they didn't get burned by the promotions withdrawal and are probably still on speaking terms. When the NWA organizes itself, All Japan or New Japan may want to take a second glance.

Knowing McMahon, the WWF will be thought of as the enemy by New Japan and All Japan after the break up. Meanwhile, the Japanese companies will learn from the mistakes that will occur with the WWF and not make them again. It might show the Japanese that they can work with an American promotion but surely they won't try another venture with Titan. Maybe in a year or two, they will be able to work an agreement with the NWA. In the NWA's current state of affairs, an agreement now would fail but give them some times and they will surely make an impact in Japan.

The April 13 Tokyo Egg Dome card will make history. Enjoy it while it lasts because you may never see McMahon shaking Baba's hand ever again, much less Sakaguchi's or Ted Turner's. However, the matchups of Hulk Hogan vs. Terry Gordy, Tenryu vs. Savage and the long-awaited return of Ted DiBiase to the Far East is certainly exciting.

PPV: It's Not As Easy As Flipping A Switch

By - Paul J. MacArthur

During the WWF vs. Viewer's Choice and the CATV industry war, the cable companies took a great deal of heat from wrestling fans for their refusal to carry the Royal Rumble. Much of the heat stemmed from this argument: If the subscriber wants to see something, the cable company is obligated to provide it. This obligation is weighted with a number of other variables, that are important when a CATV company makes a decision about a PPV event.

One of the major accusations towards the CATV operator was that the WWF was equally capable of providing the PPV event as Viewer's Choice or RTV and that the only reason the cable companies resisted was because of vertical integration. Agreed, Viewer's Choice is the result of vertical integration, but that does not explain why many cable companies who do not own a stake in VC chose not to carry the Royal Rumble. The question is what do Viewer's Choice and RTV provide the cable company that would cause them to be loyal to them in the battle against the WWF? Consistency. 24 hours per day, 365 days a year, VC and RTV provide the cable systems with programming and a stable satellite signal to the cable companies' head end. What does the WWF provide the cable company when it is not affiliated with VC or RTV? Five PPV events per year. While they make money, it is still only about 40 hours of programming provided per year at best for the cable operator. That is assuming the cable operator shows the replay, which many chose not to.

When a PPV event is run, the cable operator get 50% of the pie through Viewer's Choice. If a cable system has 40,000 subscribers, and it has been integrating an addressable system for a few years, the system most likely has between 20,000 to 30,000 addressable (capable of receiving a PPV event) subscribers. Using a one percent buy rate for an event that costs \$18.50, the cable company will take in between \$1,858.00 to \$2,783.00 for an afternoon's work. On the face of it, that looks like a great deal of money, but it does not take into consideration the expenses incurred by the cable operator. All of the following take place when a CATV company runs a major PPV making it less attractive than the figures just presented:

Subscriber Who Don't Pay Their Bill • Depending on the system and the event, this can range from one to ten percent of the PPV buyers. When you consider Wrestlemania costs more than most subscribers monthly bill there is good reason to believe the cable

company will never see ten percent of the money it's entitled.

Billing • While this is generally not a major expense, it can be time consuming and when subscribers don't pay the PPV bill, it can lead to disconnection which costs the cable operator, on average, \$30-\$45 per disconnect order. That's a major cost when you consider they also lost the money they were supposed to receive from the PPV.

Upgrade & Downgrade Costs • One week prior to the event, the CATV office will be packed with people upgrading to the addressable system. One week after the event, the CATV office will be packed with people downgrading to their old service. As the addressable system costs more per month because of its convenience and higher replacement cost, subscribers say they are upgrading for good, but in fact return to their old cheaper service after the PPV.

Overtime/Compensation Time & Worker Productivity • When a major PPV event is run, it is usually on a weekend or at night. Someone has to be there to answer the additional phone calls these events generate. Someone also has to be there to monitor the event as it is coming in should something happen anywhere from the satellite uplink to the transportation system in the headend. After a customer service representative works a PPV event, he/she is stressed out from the volume of phone calls and the number of complaints hurled at them. The end result is the customer service representative's performance for the next day or two will be sub-par at best.

Decoder Costs • Every scrambled satellite signal requires a decoder to unscramble the signal for cablecast purposes. Most systems have spare decoders in addition to the ones they use daily. These are industry standard decoders that can be authorized by any company sending a scrambled signal on a satellite. Here's the catch: the companies who provide the PPV events (this does not include VC and RTV) will not authorize a system's spare decoder. Instead they require the system to purchase one of their decoders to receive the event. They will only authorize the decoders they have sold, at \$500 a piece, even though they are the exact same decoders the CATV systems have as spares. The PPV companies claim this is to ensure only functional equipment will be used, thereby causing fewer problems with the event, but that claim is pure nonsense; it is just another way to make money on the event.

Signal Interference • Though its origins date back to Zennith's Phonevision experiments in the 1940's, PPV is still a relatively new technology in the cable industry (consider Wrestlemania will only be five years old in March and most systems that have PPV capability did not have it in 1985). With new technologies, come new problems. Anywhere from the signal transmission site of the PPV event to the home of the PPV buyer a problem with the signal can occur. The PPV companies (again VC and RTV excluded) have decided to absolve themselves of all responsibility should a problem occur. If transmission difficulties occur, the PPV company will still receive the money from the event unless it is their fault (and it never is...). The PPV companies do offer disaster insurance for such instances at \$500- \$1,000 per event.

These expenses, and they are by no means exhaustive, make running a PPV less than a desirable situation when there is a marginal buy rate. Add in the fact that Titian does not supply the constant signal VC and RTV do, and it is easy to see why a number of cable operators balked at carrying The Royal Rumble. They were morally and ethically correct in making this decision. They had a choice one afternoon of supporting their consistent 24 hour supplier of PPVs or supporting a company that would supply five PPVs over the course of one year. Perhaps this meant a number of wrestling fans would be upset because of their inability to receive the event.

The portrayal of the cable companies as heels in the instance was totally inappropriate. It was Titan who severed the working relationship they had with a faithful supplier. It was Titan who insulted the same cable companies they were trying to get to carry their event. It was

Titan's actions that would have created a poor working environment and fewer profits for the very same people they were insulting. It was the cable industry who stood up and fought for their interests, which in turn, benefits their subscribers long term interests. Last time I checked, that was the role of the babyface.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Here's some feedback about the 1st issue. About The Editors - Good to see this. Many people want to know more about who is writing these sheets. I was also a big fan of Tony Atlas back in 1980. "Gordon, it's good to be down here with these Georgia Peaches!" will always be a fond memory of Atlas. He always cracked me up with that.

To Juice or Not to Juice - I'm a big fan of the blade. I think these double standard that promotions take about the blade is stupid. We can turn on TBS and see all of Woman's breasts except her nipples, but the blade is forbidden? Hey, I'm the first to say I like Nancy's breasts, but why breasts and no blood? I do think the Funk vs. Flair bout would have been better with blood. Although they both did a great job, I just can't believe "I quit" with out juice.

Video Tape Review - I agree with you, its a great tape. I think everyone and their dog should order a copy. Brian really is a great guy, but I guess I'm a little biased.

It's not the Size - This made a few good points. I feel if this heading was in Tape Update it would have been about something else?? The steroid subject has been the subject in almost every sheet. The preaching about the misuse of drugs is good, but it is preached to deaf ears. The steroid infested business will continue to be that until someone dies. Although that probably will not hurt the steroid craze. I don't think celebrities quit doing drugs when John Belushi died. Thank God for Japanese wrestling where wrestlers aren't Vince-made monsters.

Arsenio Hall, the NWA and Marketing - Hall's show would be a perfect place for the NWA. Jim Herd needs to wake up. For the NWA to be perceived as being "major league" or "hip", they must act that way. The "Prince of Late Night Cool" Arsenio would be perfect for them.

Brian Tramel
Jonesboro, AR

Paul & Dave - Create a mental picture, if you will, of everybody and their dog ordering Brian's tape and watching it. Anyway, we're not sure the banning of the blade is comparable to how Nancy Sullivan exposes her cleavage. Television has made sex and violence a package deal. In reality, it shouldn't be. If the NWA chooses to cut down the amount of blood spilled on TV, and we can talk until dawn about the health risks and other factors, it doesn't necessarily mean they should lower Nancy's hemline or make her wear a turtleneck. Policies on sex and violence should be complementary, we do grant, but each policy should stand up on it's own merit in terms of the corporation's long term goals. The policies should not be reactionary (as the banning of the blade on television was). A reactionary policy of 'since we're cutting out the blade we must automatically make Missy dress like Laura Ingalls' would be just as bad, from a managerial point of view, as the overreacting that led to the banning of the blade in the first place. Maybe an article on Sex and Wrestling will appear in the future. We have a feeling it will remain a hot topic for a long time.

Our Special Thanks And Sincerist Gratitude To Beth Kobland Who Selflessly Helped Put This Issue Together After Our File Was Attacked By A Dreaded Computer Virus. Thanks Beth.

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